

# KEY FINDINGS

The following findings provide a foundation of issues behind barriers to access in the arts and subsequently offer reasons for future arts and disability initiatives. Many of these issues cut across much broader aspects in a variety of communities and industries throughout Australia including regional areas. Findings are provided under the following topic areas:

1. Arts
2. Disability
3. Access and Audiences
4. Connecting and Communication
5. Education and Training
6. Capacity Building.

Accessible Arts has adopted an Arts and Disability Action Strategy for NSW that will offer solutions to these findings.

Alison McLaren  
Accessible Arts  
June 2009

# ARTS

## 1.1 ARTFORM AND ARTS DEVELOPMENT

Key findings relating to artform and arts development are as follows:

- **Diverse artform experiences** that go beyond traditional craft or repetitive programming are needed by people with disability
- **Integrated opportunities** need to be provided in the broader arts community
- **A flexible approach** is required when planning and implementing arts initiatives to ensure access for people with disability
- **Strong partnerships** are critical in the delivery of sustainable arts initiatives
- **Strategic support** is required to improve the quality of arts produced by the arts and disability sector.

**Diverse artform experiences** that go beyond traditional craft or repetitive programming are needed by people with disability. Many disability organisations seek to offer basic craft activities time after time as a result of a lack of creative training and resources. People with disability participating in these programmes tire from repetitive programming and want the opportunity to try a variety of unique creative programmes that are exciting and inspiring. New media and hybrid arts can be effective in enabling flexibility and access to the creative process for people with a range of disabilities including people with limited mobility.

**Integrated opportunities** need to be provided in the broader arts community. Many people with disability would like the opportunity to get involved and participate in mainstream arts programmes. *Be My Brother* directed by Genevieve Clay with Best Actor Gerard O'Dwyer winning Tropfest in 2009 is a fantastic example of integration with a cast and crew of people with and without disability. However, these outcomes are few and far between and need to be promoted to encourage further opportunities.

**A flexible approach** is required when planning and implementing arts initiatives to ensure access for people with disability. People with disability have a variety of access needs as they will experience varying levels of their disability at different stages in their lives and may experience multiple disabilities. Programmes that for example, enable students who are unwell to re-enter the following semester where they left off will be the most successful in engaging and sustaining participants enabling the best possible outcome.

**Strong partnerships** are critical in the delivery of sustainable arts initiatives. As arts and disability projects require expertise in both the arts and disability sectors, partnerships between organisations that bridge this skill and knowledge gap are critical to enabling successful programming. Partnerships enable effective use of resources and enable people working on programmes confidence that they have been appropriately informed of steps that they require to take to achieve desired outcomes.

**Strategic support** is required to improve the quality of art produced by the arts and disability sector. Whilst there are fantastic examples of arts and disability companies as well as professional artists in NSW, there is great potential to increase their prevalence and level of success. Accessible Arts needs to offer support to emerging artists and companies to improve quality of their arts practise and enable national recognition of their achievements.

## 1.2 SPACE AND PROCESS

Key findings relating to space and process are as follows:

- **The accessibility** of new and existing spaces need to be enhanced for practising and showcasing artists with disability
- **Space to practise** in supportive and inclusive studio/s (programmes) that provide an environment free from judgment is required by artists with disability so they feel safe to develop their work.

**The accessibility** of new and existing spaces needs to be enhanced for practising and showcasing artists with disability. Many arts organisations are located in venues that are not accessible. Many new spaces only provide access to public and front of house areas, whilst, people with disability may require access as staff, artists, performers or volunteers. This means that both front and back of house areas must be accessible when establishing designs and constructing new arts spaces. Furthermore, existing spaces are often not accessible, particularly if they are older buildings. There needs to be a process for review and upgrading of existing arts spaces to bring them in line with current and future accessibility standards.

**Space to practise** in supportive and inclusive studio/s (programmes) that provide an environment free from judgment is required by artists with disability so they feel safe to develop their work. Many emerging artists with disability may not have space within their place of residence for their arts practice. Furthermore, many people with disability face attitudinal barriers when accessing arts spaces. A greater focus on the importance of space for art making and artistic process is required as is disability awareness training for staff involved.

## 1.3 SUPPORT FOR ARTISTS

Key findings relating to support for artists are as follows:

- **Advice and education** are required to provide pathways and guidance for emerging artists with disability from school to adulthood
- **Physical and/or professional assistance** with preparatory work in practice, documentation and showcasing is needed by many artists with disability
- **Outreach and public programmes** including mobile, touring and venue specific initiatives are required in remote, regional and metropolitan areas.

**Advice and education** are required to provide pathways and guidance for emerging artists with disability from school to adulthood. When students leave school, it is a critical time in their

professional development. For a variety of reasons, a career in the arts is often not considered a valid option. Many people with disability are strongly influenced by their family, carers and friends throughout their decision making process. There is a need for external opportunities to find out more information about opportunities in the arts at critical moments in career development such as when people leave school and are seeking work or education.

**Physical and/or professional assistance** with preparatory work, practice, documentation and showcasing is needed by many artists with disability. Artists with limited mobility often require assistance with setting up and packing away their materials. Without reliable assistance, access to materials can be a barrier to art making. Furthermore, many artists with disability need upskilling in documentation and preparatory work to enable their work to be presented and promoted professionally. Finally, artists with disabilities such as limited mobility may require professional assistance in preparatory work to enable the display and showcasing of their work.

**Outreach and public programmes** including mobile, touring and venue specific initiatives are required in remote, regional and metropolitan areas. Many people with disability will spend up to four hours each day travelling to the arts class or programme that they participate in. This results in a lack of connection with their local community and issues associated with travelling long distances. Outreach programmes that enable one tutor to travel to twenty participants would be more sustainable and effective than twenty participants travelling to one tutor. Mobile art workshops would also address the lack of appropriate spaces for arts workshops in regional and remote communities. Touring programmes that travel to remote and regional communities enabling people to experience art forms is critical as an introduction to the arts community. Outreach and public programmes in metropolitan areas that provide opportunities to engage in the arts industry in a non-threatening or intimidating environment is also vital for people who are not familiar with arts spaces such as people with an intellectual disability. All of these programmes increase creative engagement and activity in metropolitan and regional areas.

## 1.4 REPRESENTATION

Key findings relating to representation are as follows:

- **The profile and reach of content** by or about people with disability needs to increase to provide further opportunities for artists with disability, and to enable greater disability awareness in the arts community
- **Better quality representation and documentation** of work by artists with disability is essential.

**The profile and reach of content** by or about people with disability needs to increase to provide further opportunities for artists with disability, and to enable greater disability awareness in the arts community. Representation of work by and about people with disability in the arts community is low in comparison to the percentage of the Australian population with disability. Promotion of

achievements, exhibitions and performances by artists who identify as experiencing a disability is critical to ensure that young and emerging artists with disability can identify role models within the arts community. Many artists with disability find that it is difficult to break into the arts industry to exhibit and showcase their work. However, this is essential to ensure that their work has a broader reach and impact than remaining static within the community sector.

**Better quality representation and documentation** of work by artists with disability is essential. Many people with disability participate in targeted creative programmes. These opportunities can be invaluable. However, where community events and programmes are prepared and showcased by staff who have a lack of training and expertise in creative industries, works can often unintentionally be displayed with a lack of integrity, professionalism and respect. Furthermore, emerging artists with disability require training in quality documentation processes to enable them to promote their work effectively within an arts industry context and gain additional work and employment opportunities as a result.

## 1.5 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Key findings relating to professional development are as follows:

- **Accessible residencies, mentorship and scholarship programmes** are required by artists with disability to gain professional pathways and experiences in the arts.

**Accessible residencies, mentorship and scholarship programmes** are required by artists with disability to gain professional pathways and experiences in the arts. Many residency spaces are inaccessible making physical access to residencies difficult. Scholarship programmes have complicated application processes that can be difficult for people with language, learning or intellectual disabilities. Mentorship opportunities are often unattainable as the informal networking processes that facilitate mentor relationships are difficult to infiltrate as a result of attitudinal awareness in the arts community. There is also a lack of mentoring opportunities in general. It will be crucial for the arts community to address access within residency, mentor and scholarship programmes to enable equitable access for all artists with and without disabilities throughout their professional development.

## 1.6 EMPLOYMENT

Key findings relating to employment are as follows:

- **Information** about professional groups and opportunities is crucial to enable people with disability to gain employment in the arts
- **Engagement of employees** with disability in the arts industry is currently low and needs to be addressed

- **Employment opportunities and pathways** need to be established through partnerships with employment agencies, arts organisations and relevant government bodies
- **Skilled volunteers** need to be mobilised to assist staff with arts and disability projects and address lack of resources.

**Information** about professional groups and opportunities is crucial to enable people with disability to gain employment in the arts. For many people leaving school or looking for a new career path, the range of career options available in creative industries are often dispersed making them hard to locate at first. As many people with disability find it difficult to travel, making way between the variety of open days at various universities and TAFE colleges can be unachievable. It would be productive to bring information about the variety of pathways, options, arts networks and companies together in one place on an annual basis to enable and informed and well-directed emerging arts community. Talks and debates by established arts professionals would also be valuable to enable participants the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and make decisions that are unique to them.

**Engagement of employees** with disability in the arts industry is currently low and needs to be addressed. Often people with disability are reluctant to disclose information regarding their disability in recruitment and employment processes for fear of being disadvantaged as a result of a lack of attitudinal access within arts organisations and their human resource departments. Those who have identified as experiencing a disability represent a low proportion of the arts sector that is far less than the proportion of the population who experience a disability. Some people who experience a disability such as Aspergers have found they are more likely to secure a position if they don't identify their disability, however, the lack of awareness of employers of procedural steps that would enable their work to be more efficient is frustrating and reduces their access to working effectively within the organisation as a result. Proactive employment processes and improved attitudinal access within supervisory and management levels would work towards addressing this disparity.

**Employment opportunities and pathways** need to be established through partnerships with employment agencies, arts organisations and relevant government bodies. Employment agencies such as Centrelink may not be aware of all the career options available in the arts industry. Work with employment agencies is required to ensure that they can direct clients with and without disabilities to employment options that match their interests. Furthermore, work with arts organisations is required to enable entry level and progressive employment opportunities for arts professionals with disability. This includes ensuring access to front and back of house areas as well as training opportunities, promotion and review processes.

**Skilled volunteers** need to be mobilised to assist staff with arts and disability projects and address lack of resources. Many arts and disability projects are under-resourced and experience a lack of personnel as a result. Depending on the nature of the programme or project, there is often a requirement for assistance and staff to participant ratios. Where appropriate, those working on projects may like to upskill volunteers who are able to assist professionally training creative staff.

Volunteering is also a fantastic way to gain work experience whether you experience a disability or not. It is integral that in the case that a volunteer is seeking stepping stones towards employment, that support or opportunities are made available to enable the individuals to move forward with their career.

## 2. DISABILITY

Key findings relating to disability are as follows:

- **Disability Arts Coordinators** are required to ensure that quality arts programmes are offered within all disability services
- **Meaningful and consistent consultation** is imperative to enable the disability sector to meet the creative interests and needs of its clients
- **The value of the arts** needs to be promoted through information and education to the disability sector
- **Participants' access needs** need to be considered and catered for in the planning, marketing, implementation and evaluation of initiatives
- **Carers** are often forgotten and need to be engaged in or provided with respite through creative programmes.

**Disability Arts Coordinators** are required to ensure that quality arts programmes are offered within all disability services. Many disability organisations offer arts or craft programmes that are delivered by carers and staff not trained in the arts. Many people with disability have not been given the opportunity to participate in or experience a variety of arts opportunities and therefore, they are not necessarily aware of the variety of options that could be made available to them. Disability Arts Coordinators would facilitate a variety of experiences and opportunities for people with disability so that they can gain a taste of the arts including both audience and arts development. They would also work with participants to identify what interested them to enable additional skills development in those areas. Disability Arts Coordinators would be trained in the arts and would ensure quality programming and the engagement of a range of tutors with specialised skills in specific artforms. Experience, process and showcasing should be weighted with equal value.

**Meaningful and consistent consultation** is imperative to enable the disability sector to meet the creative interests and needs of its clients. Carers and staff of disability services are often structured and trained in an environment where there is not a culture established to ask people with disability what they are interested in or would like to participate in. This is a critical issue. Ageing parents of people with disability are aware that their children have specific creative interests that they enable their children to participate in. However, they are also aware that when they are no longer able to facilitate these opportunities, the disability or residential service are unlikely to facilitate their participation in activities of interest to them. Formal staff to client ratios lack the flexibility to enable participation of individuals in programmes specific to them. Instead, group experiences are defined

often by what the carer or staff member identifies. There needs to be structures set in place to ensure that people with disability direct and gain the opportunity to participate in activities and programmes that they are passionate about.

**The value of the arts** needs to be promoted through information and education to the disability sector. Family, friends carers and staff of disability services often haven't gained the opportunity to experience or participate in the arts. As a result, they can be unaware of the value of the arts and creative processes. In fact, some carers noted that they found arts organisations to be intimidating and of a different level to what they felt was appropriate to engage in. This can impact on the programmes and activities that people choose and subsequently impacts on the opportunities available for people with disability. Education and information about opportunities need to be made available to the disability sector to address this issue.

**Participants' access needs** require consideration and provision in the planning, marketing, implementation and evaluation of initiatives. Arts organisations identified that when planning programmes for people with disability, it was valuable to know what access needs each individual experienced. However, they identified that often the access needs of individuals was overlooked by disability services organising visits. This could be because access requirements become part of every day life. However, arts organisations such as the Museum of Contemporary Art have found that detailed information about visitor access requirements assists in providing full and inclusive experiences through flexible education and outreach programmes.

**Ageing people with disability** may be at the peak of their arts education and need to be funded past the age of 65. Many people receive government funding to attend their local disability services. This enables people to participate in arts events, activities and occasionally, professional arts tutoring or mentoring. However, as 65 is identified as an appropriate retirement age, many people who have begun developing a strong arts practice or are producing quality works are no longer funded to participate in the local programme. This results in talented artists being sent home where they have no access to tutors, materials or professional opportunities. Many artists do not retire at the age of 65. Funding needs to be made available to enable people with disability to practice and develop their arts skills over the age of 65. A successful example of this is the Art Out of Garage outreach programme established by the Tulgeen Group in Bega where they secured Australia Council for the Arts funding to enable continued tutoring on a one-on-one basis in the homes of individuals over the age of 65 and individuals with profound disability who can no longer leave their homes. This has resulted in the successful sale of artworks.

**Carers** are often forgotten and need to be engaged in or provided with respite through creative programmes. Many carers gain little support through current government and disability service policies. When caring becomes a full-time role on top of work and other commitments, there is little space, financial capacity or resources to explore individual creative interests. Furthermore, carers identified that when their family member was participating in a creative programme, this provided an opportunity to communicate in a different environment increasing their bond and improving their

relationship. Others identified that a family member participating in a creative programme provided them with critical respite.

### 3. ACCESS AND AUDIENCES

#### 3.1 PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES

Key findings relating to programming and services are as follows:

- **Increased interactive experiences** are required by audiences with access needs
- **Flexible programming and access services** for all content in the arts are essential to enable access for people with disability to arts experiences of their choice
- **Improved access services** are required in all arts organisations to increase the proportion of audience members that have disability
- **Access services** are required for all content in the arts industry so that audiences may select events that are of interest to them
- **Local arts opportunities** are important for people with disability, whether they are emerging audiences or arts professionals
- **Ageing people with disability** may be at the peak of their arts education and need to be funded past the age of 65
- **People with disability who also come from CALD backgrounds** need to be catered for within arts and disability initiatives to prevent double disadvantage.

**Increased interactive experiences** are required by audiences with access needs. For people with sensory, communication or intellectual disabilities, interactive experiences such as tactile tours, audio description conversation groups, Auslan or arts making tours can bring the work closer to the individual. Interactive experiences enable a more full experience for audiences and visitors who are often excluded from the arts. Examples of access programmes including those provided by the Art Gallery of NSW, the Museum of Contemporary Art and Penrith Regional Gallery and the Lewers Bequest have established repeat visitors and effectively increased audience numbers for these organisations.

**Flexible programming and access services** for all content in the arts are essential to enable access for people with disability to arts experiences of their choice. Many access services are offered in an ad hoc fashion, such as once each year for International Day of People With Disability, or three times each year on a Sunday at 10am. As people with disability have equal rights, equal access should be flexible and available on demand enabling visitors with disability to go to the gallery, performance or event when they choose and when it is appropriate for them, as all other audiences are able to choose. Without choice, people with disability experience second class citizenship in the arts. This needs to be address over time with sustainable strategies for on-demand delivery of access services.

**Improved access services** are required in all arts organisations to increase the proportion of audience members that have disability. Many arts organisations don't provide physical or attitudinal access and they don't provide access information to enable increased participation by the one in five people who experience a disability. It is vital that access is considered as part of the core business of an arts organisation to enable increased participation of people with disability in the arts. People with disability identified they had been refused access not simply through deliberate action, but also as a result of a lack of communication and poor awareness and operational procedures. This has resulted in people being locked out, unenrolled and refused entry to name just a few examples. People without disabilities would not accept this treatment and nor should people with disability be asked to.

**Access services are required for all content** in the arts industry so that audiences may select events that are of interest to them. People with disability are often provided with limited options of what they are able to attend. For example, only some films are captioned, only some plays are audio described and only some exhibitions provide tactile opportunities. It is often assumed that people with disability will only be interested in arts content about or by people with disability. Whilst this can be of great interest, it is certainly not the only area of interest. People with disability are not a homogenous group. Interests, passions, experiences and leisure time is as diverse as the broader population. All content requires access in all regions.

**Local arts opportunities** are important for people with disability, whether they are emerging audiences or arts professionals. For many people with disability, it is difficult to travel as a result of a lack of accessible and affordable transport. For many people, it is local exposure to the arts through participating in a workshop, course or attending an event or exhibition that will inspire interest. These local opportunities also allow people to establish their professional interests and can be the starting point for a career in the arts. Many communities, particularly in remote or rural areas do not have local arts workshops, venues or performances and have expressed the need for touring performances and local accessible venues.

**People with disability who also come from CALD backgrounds** need to be catered for within arts and disability initiatives to prevent double barriers. People with disability who are also from a linguistically diverse background can experience double barriers. For example, someone may have English as a second language and may also experience a disability that affects their communication. People with disability from a culturally diverse background may experience additional barriers as a result of stigmatisation in the community or as a result of the beliefs of their family or friends. Partnerships with peak bodies advocating for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will be critical in breaking down these barriers and improving opportunities for people to participate in the arts.

### **3.2 STRATEGY**

Key findings relating to strategy are as follows:

- **Affordability of events** is a major barrier for many people with disability and therefore needs to be considered by arts organisations
- **Ticketing policies and practices** need to be improved if people with disability are to experience equitable access to the arts
- **Accessibility of transport** to and from venues is a major barrier for many people with disability and therefore needs to be considered by arts organisations
- **Consistent advocacy and support** of the arts sector is required to improve access to the arts
- **A holistic approach** is required to provide the most effective and sustainable access to the arts.

**Affordability of events** is a major barrier for many people with disability and therefore needs to be considered by arts organisations. Many people with disability find the cost of attending arts events prohibitive. Issues such as reduced earning capacity and increased transport and medical costs can all contribute to financial barriers. Where possible group rates or minimum ticket costs can be appreciated. Furthermore, people with disability in every community identified that implementation of free ticketing policies for carers such as the Companion Card can greatly assist in improving financial access to the arts.

**Ticketing policies and practices** need to be improved if people with disability are to experience equitable access to the arts. Many arts organisations do not incorporate accessible ticketing as part of their general proceedings. Many people with disability are asked to call a separate number between 10am and 2pm and are unable to book tickets through the standard process. This is problematic, can be inconvenient and results in people with disabilities missing out on tickets to popular events that sell out quickly. Ticketing policies need to consider appropriate seating areas for: people who use a wheelchair and would like to sit next to their companion; people who use a wheelchair and would like to sit next to their companion who also uses a wheelchair; people who would like to use Auslan interpretation services; people who require assistive listening devices; people who require audio description; people with low vision who would like to sit near the front with a clear sight line; people with mental health issues who would like to sit on the end of a row so that they may leave during the performance if need be without disturbing other audience members; people with limited mobility who can climb one or two stairs, but not many stairs; people with behavioural issues who may like to sit in a box seat where other audiences will not be affected. Each of these groups of people who require specific access services or facilities, may need to sit in a different area of the venue depending on the percentage of area covered by or with a clear sightline to the particular service.

**Accessibility of transport** to and from venues is a major barrier for many people with disability and therefore needs to be considered by arts organisations. Many people with disabilities may not have their own car or may live in a regional area where there is no public transport. People living in metropolitan areas may have to travel up to one hour in the wrong direction to get public transport

to go back to the venue where they would like to go due to transport often travelling in and out of the city centre, but not across between suburbs. People who had low vision and people with an intellectual disability in Western and Southern Sydney also expressed fear to travel on public transport at night due to broader community safety issues. People in the Blue Mountains identified that whilst they had access to train stations, there were no buses to get you to and from the train and in the case where there were buses, they would travel irregularly and not at the time when they required to travel. Access to transport was noted as a major barrier in every consultation in metropolitan and regional consultations. Arts organisations aiming to increase ticket sales would be wise to work in partnership with a range of community organisations, local governments and the department of transport to enable transport for guests with and without disabilities to their venues and events.

**Consistent advocacy and support** of the arts sector is required to improve access to the arts. Many arts organisations have a high turn over of staff. Not a single arts organisation is 100 per cent accessible. Each organisation has many challenges ahead to address if they are to realise equal access for the one in five Australians who experience a disability. However, many organisations are not intentionally limiting access. It is a lack of access to information, resources and financial capacity that makes the road to full access slow for the arts industry. Accessible Arts needs to continue to work with the arts to improve access for people with disabilities as visitors, arts professionals and volunteers.

**A holistic approach** is required to provide the most effective and sustainable access to the arts. Some arts organisations have achieved access to physical space, to programming or attitudinal access through well trained front of house staff. However, only arts organisations that embrace access as core business and incorporate it into their general planning, budgeting, building management, operational procedures, orientation, training and human resource practices as well as programming, communications and front of house procedures will realise a holistic approach to access that is required to provide full access.

### 3.3 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Key findings relating to information and communication are as follows:

- **Communication** between audiences and venues is required to ensure that there is consistency between information promoted and the actual experience of people with disability
- **Access information** is critical to engage audiences with disability, however it is often omitted from promotional materials
- **Access to information** needs to be improved, with consistent use of accessible and alternative formats of information
- **Guidance** that is clear and concise outlining appropriate practices that provide access for audiences with disability is required within the arts industry.

**Communication** between audiences and venues is required to ensure that there is consistency between information promoted and the actual experience of people with disability. There is much to be learned from talking directly with people who you are aiming to attract to an arts venue. Whilst many people with disability identified problems of arts venues lacking awareness and choosing to talk directly to their companions rather than them, others identified a communication block between arts organisations and their visitors. Arts organisations that have gained access advisors are more likely to be accessible. However, it is only through ongoing communication with patrons that arts organisations will truly learn the best way to provide access to all people with and without disabilities.

**Access information** is critical to engage audiences with disability, however it is often omitted from promotional materials. People with disability identified that they often have to make between two and ten phone calls just to identify whether they will be able to get to, get inside, move around and gain access to facilities whilst they are at an arts venue. Access information that provides clear information about what people with disability will experience when they attend a venue provides peace of mind, is more convenient and is likely to increase your audience numbers. By including access information and symbols in all online and hard copy promotional materials, an arts organisation sends a message that they are working towards providing equal access for people with disabilities.

**Access to information** needs to be improved, with consistent use of accessible and alternative formats of information. Arts organisations are increasingly using websites and online communication to promote their venues and events. However, many websites have been designed in a way that makes access by someone with low vision using a screen reader impossible. Furthermore, people with limited mobility may be unable to use a mouse and instead required the website to be easily navigated using only the keyboard of a computer. Graphic designers are consistently designing programs and publications that are inaccessible for a range of reasons including small font, minimal contrast between background and foreground and glossy textures. Some basic access guidelines that are available for print and publications would address this, however, access is often low on the agenda when working with graphic designers. Furthermore alternative formats such as large print information are easy to produce. Although, often there is no reason why the main program, exhibition catalogue or guide couldn't be large print enabling ease of access not only for those with low vision, but also for those who don't identify as having a disability such as people who are older or simply forgot their glasses. The main mistake that you see when people produce alternative formats is that they put additional unnecessary resources into them, such as having them bound and covered and then asking patrons to return them when others are able to take their programme or catalogue home with them as a memento of the experience. If access were simply incorporated into the general procedures and practices of an organisation, it would be a lot more straightforward and affordable.

**Guidance** that is clear and concise outlining appropriate practices that provide access for audiences with disability is required within the arts industry. Many arts organisations identified that access seems difficult and unattainable. Many people are less likely to act because they are afraid

of getting it wrong. Arts organisations operate within limited timeframes and resources and don't have the capacity to undertake extensive research. Resources that provide clear answers for the arts industry on what they need to do to provide access are required. These resources need to be quick and easy to navigate.

## 4. CONNECTING AND COMMUNICATING

### 4.1 PARTNERSHIPS

Key findings relating to partnerships are as follows:

- **Sharing and lending of equipment and resources** for arts and disability initiatives is required to address lack of funding
- **Relationships with organisations** in both the arts and disability sectors need to be maintained to ensure projects are effectively targeted.

**Sharing and lending of equipment and resources** for arts and disability initiatives is required to address lack of funding. The arts sector is under-resourced and the disability sector is under-resourced. When both these industries are working together, there is rarely additional funding for projects. However, through working in partnership, in-kind arrangements and sharing equipment, projects are more likely to be implemented effectively and efficiently.

**Relationships with organisations** in both the arts and disability sectors need to be maintained to ensure projects are effectively targeted. The arts industry is skilled and understanding of what makes quality arts programming. The disability sector is knowledgeable and understands how to improve access and work with people with a range of disabilities. Partnerships between arts and disability organisations that allow staff to share knowledge and skills is critical if arts and disability projects are to be successful.

### 4.2 NETWORKS

Key findings relating to networks are as follows:

- **Face-to-face networking** is required to enable inspiration, connection and exchange between the arts and disability sectors
- **Online communication** is needed to support the arts and disability networks
- **Networking opportunities** need to connect with skills development to address the training requirements of existing and future arts and disability networks
- **DAWN** needs to be further established as a dynamic and skilled pool of creative professionals who have the capacity to tap into cross-sectoral employment opportunities

- **Regional communities** need local and statewide support to address unique arts and disability issues and solutions
- **Indigenous communities** need consistent and culturally appropriate arts and disability support to address double barriers within the arts
- **Creative opportunities that enable connection with local communities** are needed by people with disability.

**Face-to-face networking** is required to enable inspiration, connection and exchange between the arts and disability sectors. At each consultation throughout the research period, participants identified the value of meeting in a face-to-face capacity. Many participants had not met one another before or worked in a cross sector environment including both the arts and disability sectors. Many communities have continued their networks following meetings and as a result of these connections, further arts and disability projects and initiatives are emerging. Face-to-face networking addresses isolation and brings people together more closely in a capacity that enables local and sustainable support for arts and disability initiatives.

**Online communication** is needed to support the arts and disability networks. Whilst face-to-face networking is critical, many arts and disability workers or staff are often the only staff member working within their organisation or community on arts and disability projects. This can be isolating, particularly in regional areas. Online opportunities to share case studies of projects, identify skills, knowledge and opportunities is critical to enable the proliferation and upskilling of the arts and disability sector.

**Networking opportunities** need to connect with skills development to address the training requirements of existing and future arts and disability networks. Training was identified as a large gap in the area of arts and disability. As formal training opportunities fall under the arts sector or the disability / social work sector, few people working in the industry have formal training in both areas. Targeted training opportunities that are responsive to identified training needs should be delivered to complement existing and emerging networking forums.

**Disability arts workers** needs to be further established as a dynamic and skilled pool of creative professionals who have the capacity to tap into cross-sectoral employment opportunities. Many disability arts workers identified that it was difficult to gain employment. Some organisations identified that it was hard to find disability arts workers with skills that would address their targeted project. Support needs to be provided to both upskill and connect disability arts workers with employment opportunities.

**Regional communities** need local and statewide support to address unique arts and disability issues and solutions. Whilst all communities across the state experience similar statewide arts and disability issues, some regional communities experience unique issues due to their geographic isolation, the history of the development of infrastructure in the local area and the existence (or lack

of) surrounding industry to provide financial and populous support for the development of appropriate facilities and resources for arts and disability projects. It will be critical that Accessible Arts as a peak body maintain the capacity to work not only on statewide issues, but also work in a supportive way to assist communities in delivering projects that will improve their arts and disability capacity.

**Indigenous communities** need consistent and culturally appropriate arts and disability support to address double barriers within the arts. Community members of an Aboriginal background who participated in the consultations identified the need for: the development of ongoing relationships with long-term staff; the engagement of an Indigenous Arts and Disability Officer with the cultural awareness and capacity to deliver arts and disability projects that are responsive to the interests and needs of Aboriginal communities; the need for programmes to be affordable (if not free); many Aboriginal communities will not use the term disability as it is considered just part of their every day experiences; and there needs to be increased awareness and training within communities to reduce cultural barriers. The Indigenous population in Australia experience higher rates of disability at a younger age than the general population. The arts are integral to Indigenous culture. People who are Aboriginal and experience a disability identified regularly encountering double barriers. It will be critical to engage an Indigenous Australian to undertake further conversations with Aboriginal communities across NSW and identify arts and disability projects that could be implemented to address identified needs.

**Creative opportunities that enable connection with local communities** are needed by people with disability. A range of outreach and locally driven projects were identified by communities. These initiatives are critical to the unique development of arts and disability in each community. One size will not fit all and it was clear that whilst some communities had strong accessible arts spaces, they may have also had weak networking or programmes. Similarly, where communities had strong networks, they didn't have any accessible arts spaces. These unique issues need to be addressed through local, state and federal partnerships.

### 4.3 INFORMATION AND INTERNET

Key findings relating to information and internet are as follows:

- **Access to online information** is needed to ensure that people can find out more about arts and disability initiatives and opportunities
- **Increased information resources** that are relevant and targeted are required by arts and disability organisations.

**Access to online information** is needed to ensure that people can find out more about arts and disability initiatives and opportunities. Many regional communities identified access to the internet as problematic. Furthermore, the reduced earning capacity of many people with disability makes financial access to the internet difficult. Local free internet points of access will be important for

people to access online information about arts and disability opportunities, resources and case studies.

**Increased information resources** that are relevant and targeted are required by arts and disability organisations. Across all communities, individuals identified that they would like to do more to provide access, however, they didn't know where to go for the right information and resources. Furthermore, until people have worked on arts and disability projects, they can feel unsure of what questions to ask. It will be critical to work collaboratively to deliver these resources.

#### 4.4 MARKETING, MEDIA AND PROMOTION

Key findings relating to marketing, media and promotion are as follows:

- **Greater distribution** is required to ensure that clients and people with disability receive timely information about creative opportunities in their area
- **Media profiling** of people and issues in the arts and disability sector needs to be increased, using a strategic approach
- **Targeted marketing training** is required by organisations to tap into the arts and disability sector
- **Media representation** of people with disability is stereotypical and infrequent and needs to be improved through strong advocacy initiatives
- **Quality documentation and case studies** about leading examples of arts and disability are critical to progress and recognition.

**Greater distribution** is required to ensure that clients and people with disability receive timely information about creative opportunities in their area. Many people with disability identified that they have received information after an event. Furthermore, some carers will only pass on information that is of interest to them. These barriers need to be addressed if people with disability are to gain full access to participate in areas of arts and cultural life that interest them.

**Media profiling** of people and issues in the arts and disability sector needs to be increased, using a strategic approach. The profile of arts and disability projects across NSW is low and irregular. Coverage in mainstream media outlets is critical if people from both the arts and disability sectors are to recognise the value and outcomes of arts and disability.

**Targeted marketing training** is required by organisations to tap into the arts and disability sector. Many arts and disability projects are delivered at a community level. This results in many people working on events or projects for the first time. As a result, skills and experience in marketing opportunities and events is often low. This needs to be addressed through targeted marketing

training to ensure that people with disability in local communities gain the opportunity to participate in emerging initiatives.

**Media representation** of people with disability is stereotypical and infrequent and needs to be improved through strong advocacy initiatives. Many people with disability find it difficult to gain work. Many characters with disability are portrayed as one-dimensional. Furthermore, often people without disabilities secure roles to act as people with disability. This lack of representation needs to be addressed through high-level lobbying and advocacy at broadcasting and production levels and through media guidelines.

**Quality documentation and case studies** about leading examples of arts and disability are critical to progress and recognition. There are many exciting arts and disability projects operating across NSW. However, documentation of these initiatives is low and needs to be improved to ensure that creative arts and disability projects in NSW are better represented and in turn, that they upskill fellow colleagues.

## 5. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Several of Accessible Arts' education and training initiatives are designed to raise awareness. The information provided in this chapter is a key to understanding some of the more complex access issues faced.

### 5.1 TRAINING

Key findings relating to training are as follows:

- **Formal training and education** needs to incorporate arts and disability content
- **Professional training and development opportunities** are required for people interested in arts and disability
- **Greater access to training and education** is required by people with disability, as barriers continue to exist, despite preventative policies
- **Disability awareness training** is central to broader community awareness and needs to be increased
- **Arts Awareness Training** is needed to enable disability services to gain greater understanding of creative opportunities and the arts
- **Arts workers who are trained in the delivery of adaptable art education** are required by people with specific access needs.

**Formal training and education** needs to incorporate arts and disability content. Many communities identified that it would be critical to raise awareness at the very roots in communities.

A core way to ensure this is to provide awareness training to all age groups through educational opportunities. Partnerships with educational institutions will be critical in this matter.

**Professional training and development opportunities** are required for people interested in arts and disability. Many people may be trained in disability or the arts, but not both. Furthermore, carers and people who come to the arts and disability sector, have not always undertaken formal training. This needs to be addressed through targeted training opportunities.

**Greater access to training and education** is required by people with disability, as barriers continue to exist, despite preventative policies. Whilst there are policies in place that identify that people with disability have equal access to educational opportunities at a primary, secondary and tertiary level, in practice, people with disability regularly experience barriers to training and education. These can be through administrative processes, or through the lack of skills of particular teachers or a lack of funds for support workers. These practical issues, or root causes of discrimination need to be addressed.

**Disability awareness training** is central to broader community awareness and needs to be increased. There are a large number of people in the arts sector and broader community that maintain very low awareness levels about people with disability and their needs. This needs to be addressed through both targeted awareness training in the sector as well as broader initiatives that gain high public recognition.

**Arts Awareness Training** is needed to enable disability services to gain greater understanding of creative opportunities and the arts. Many disability services are unfamiliar with the arts sector and identified arts opportunities as separate to the interests and needs of their clients. Furthermore, carers lacked confidence and skills in working with arts professionals or visiting arts venues. This needs to be addressed through customised training that is coupled with practical experiences.

**Arts workers who are trained in the delivery of adaptable art education** are required by people with specific access needs. Whilst arts workers may be creative in the way that they deliver access, many tutors identified that they required additional skills in the delivery of creative programmes in a way that would suit the particular levels of ability and access needs of clients with a variety of disabilities.

## 6. CAPACITY BUILDING

### 6.1 POLICY AND PLANNING

Key findings relating to policy and planning are as follows:

- **Integrated planning** is needed to provide a strong foundation for arts and disability initiatives
- **Lobbying and implementation of solutions** in this Research is required to meet the needs of arts and disability stakeholders
- **Ongoing consultation with stakeholders** about arts and disability issues is required throughout implementation
- **Research** is required to provide background information for the political and financial support required to implement solutions.

**Integrated planning** is needed to provide a strong foundation for arts and disability initiatives. Without systemic planning for arts and disability initiatives, there will be no long-term provision for arts and disability projects. Planning initiatives assist management from arts, disability, local government and community organisations to commit to access as well as arts and disability. Budgeting and reporting procedures should also reflect this progress.

**Lobbying and implementation of solutions** in this research is required to meet the needs of arts and disability stakeholders. Accessible Arts will need to work in partnership with government at all levels as well as arts, disability and community organisations to enable appropriate implementation of solutions in this plan.

**Ongoing consultation with stakeholders** about arts and disability issues is required throughout implementation. As the community were engaged in consultations, they identified that they would like ongoing involvement in the delivery of this document. This is also critical to ensure that Accessible Arts work is responsive to our stakeholders over time. As a result, ongoing consultation will ensure that our work as a peak body is guided by real experiences of people with disability on the ground.

**Research** is required to provide background information for the political and financial support required to implement solutions. Whilst this document provides initial findings, further targeted and detailed research is required to secure additional support for arts and disability in NSW. It will be critical to secure meaningful quantitative data and statistics as well as qualitative information.

## 6.2 FUNDING

Key findings relating to funding are as follows:

- **Funding** continues to be a major barrier to the growth of arts and disability in NSW, and approaches that are both persistent and fresh are required.

**Funding** continues to be a major barrier to the growth of arts and disability in NSW, and approaches that are both persistent and fresh are required. As with many community initiatives, funding continues to be a barrier to the delivery of projects. However, many participants identified innovative ways of thinking outside the box, securing in-kind support and sharing resources to address a lack of financial resources. However, without funding, many arts and disability projects will cease to exist and it will be valuable to facilitate information about a variety of funding options.

## 7. IMPLEMENTATION

The key finding relating to implementation is as follows:

- **Lobbying and implementation of solutions** in this Strategy is required to meet the needs of arts and disability stakeholders.

'Speak Up' consultations were undertaken with an inclusive approach over a long timeframe. This enabled local communities to guide the direction of dialogue and identify the issues and solutions they believed would work well in their community. As a result, throughout implementation of 'Speak Up: Arts and Disability Priorities', it will be essential that ownership for the realisation of solutions is maintained within communities. It will be crucial for organisations in the arts, disability, government, education and transport sectors at Local, State and Federal levels to consider issues and incorporate solutions in their policies and plans. A systemic approach to the support of arts and disability initiatives across NSW was identified as a key priority area. Without long lasting change and opportunities, individuals with disability are left with an ad hoc array of one-off projects. As the peak arts and disability organisation across NSW, Accessible Arts will ensure that this living research document that identifies priorities for arts and disability is updated and implemented over time, maintaining open dialogue with representatives and stakeholders.